

## **Full STEAM ahead; where have we gotten?**

Since having the honor of becoming the principal of Thomas Prince in July of 2015, I have maintained the mantra of “Full STEAM Ahead” in all my decision making processes. Over the past months I have worked with the staff, administration, and community stakeholders in creating a School Improvement Plan as well as a five year vision for TPS. During that time much reflection took place in regards to the various changes which have occurred at TPS that have kept us moving forward, helping us to receive the honor of being a Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commendation School. I greatly appreciate the constructive feedback I receive from TPS community and hope that people will continue to reach out directly to me with suggestions, concerns and advice. Change is difficult and at times uncomfortable; the administration, faculty and staff are committed to confronting obstacles, providing support, and being receptive to feedback to assure that every TPS student can reach success.

### **SCHOOL SAFETY**

Through the school year I meet with our school safety team quarterly, composed of administration, the police chief and the deputy fire chief to discuss, create, and reflect upon safety plans. It is through these round table meetings we are able to recognize areas of safety concerns and create best practices for TPS based upon research and advice of public safety officials. Through meetings like these TPS developed a more secure setting in which visitors are required to sign-in to the building, a pick up and dismissal traffic management plan, and controlled emergency evacuation plans. These meetings are of the utmost importance to keep our children safe and secure in our school building.

### **CURRICULUM**

The mission of Thomas Prince is to educate the whole child through the utilization of a STEAM integrated curriculum. TPS provides an opportunity for innovative thinkers and mindful learners to engage in an educational atmosphere grounded in respect, responsibility and readiness to learn. Our vision is to improve STEAM integrated education for all students grades k-8 using evidence based practices.

Our staff at TPS has spent a great deal of time in professional development offerings that align with our STEAM philosophy and social emotional wellness of students. Two of our teachers, Mrs. Martinez and Mrs. McCluskey both received STEM certification through our industry partner, PTC, a global provider of technology platforms. Every

staff member has received training in backwards design, Stanford University’s Design Thinking Process model, PBIS, restorative circles, mindfulness and yoga techniques. Many teachers have participated in the STEM network series as well as countless other STEM professional development offerings.

Last January, after the state adopted the new STE (Science, Technology and Engineering) Frameworks, we began our work in creating a STEAM aligned curriculum supported by STEAM instructional practices. Through the work of backwards curriculum design, blueprinting assessments, and unit planning this school year the TPS teachers, during staff meetings, are creating a vertically aligned STEAM curriculum. We will not be a school that simply does STEAM projects; STEAM will be imbedded in all our classes each day of learning. TPS will continue to welcome STEAM professionals into our classrooms to work alongside and present to our students so that they benefit from real world connections to the curriculum. Along with the STEAM this curriculum we have developed a list of annual field trips and/or events that will occur at each grade level. You will notice that in this proposal, Nature’s Classroom will now take place YEARLY in grade 5 only.

Kindergarten	Discovery museum traveling science workshop		
1	Discovery museum traveling science workshop		
2	Roger Williams Zoo		
3	Boston museum of science	Tour of Princeton	
4	Mechanic's Hall - Music	Watershed -April/May	
5	Nature's Classroom - Science		
6	Hanover Theater in December- 5 short stories	McAuliffe Center at Framingham State (?)	
7	Art- Worcester Art Museum - Spanish Exhibit - Spring 2016	7/8 Trip to Hanover to see A Christmas Carol (English	Canobe Lake physics trip
8	Washington DC	Standards RL 7.7)*Alternating years	

**PBIS**

In the fall of 2015 the TPS staff began professional development in tiered systems. A system that resonated with the staff as a need for our community was PBIS - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Through the commitment and hardwork of the TPS staff we were able to launch PBIS in January of 2016. It is through PBIS that we

developed our core values and TPS Pledge. We use PBIS to teach behavioral expectations in the same way as we approach all core curriculum. Our expectation matrix is known by our students and staff as well as being made public on our webpage devoted to PBIS and social emotional learning. Each day our students and staff recite the student led TPS pledge during our morning announcements. To honor our students we hold a PBIS quarterly award ceremony in which students are celebrated for their commitment to our Core Values. PBIS teacher led teams meet weekly to review data and discuss student needs, in effort to meet all our students' need in a thoughtful and collaborative approach.

### **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GROWTH**

The growth of our students, both academic and social emotional, is our priority at TPS. Last year we implemented an advisory curriculum which focuses upon social emotional learning, college and career connections, and organizational skills began in grades 6-8. Our advisory groups have take on the responsibility of showing compassion and leadership roles through their group creation of the TPS Smiles initiative, becoming part of Lucy's KidsCorps, working with a 3rd grade class here at TPS to raise money for Elm Park Community school, volunteering to spread mulch, and being bus buddies.

This school year Twisted Kids Yoga piloted an 8 week yoga series for our students through a combination of yoga in the classroom, movement breaks, and professional learning for our teachers. We have continued our partnership with the Audubon and Wachusett Meadow to develop opportunities for our students such as Field Guides and curriculum units that incorporate the use of our trails.

We have seen our students thrive in the last year and a half. Last year the 7th grade class took over field day as a PBIS celebration so that all students would be able to participate together, thus beginning a tradition in which each year the 7th grade students will design field day. Middle school students have volunteered to be Thomas Prince Ambassadors, in which they provide tours of the school and volunteer during tours and open house activities. We had 6th grade students honored as ECyber Mission regional winners. The student Field Guides continue to be a long standing tradition at TPS; last year together with Wachusett Meadow, the Audubon and the PTA Green Team the trails were re-dedicated to Joann Blum and celebrated Earth Day in her honor, which will remain a tradition at the school. Our music department expanded our concert series last year to include the spring concert for grades k-4 on the field. Our STEAM Expo continues to grow and expand; this year we will progress forward and the expo will feature more focus upon student work and creations. The Arts Festival will take place in March, and we will highlight the "A" in STEAM through a community effort.

## **STAFFING**

Our administration, faculty and staff changed remarkably in just the last year and a half! In total we have had 24 new employees come to Thomas Prince. With each new hire, no matter what the position, we seek to add members to our community who understand our STEAM school, commit to PBIS and our Core Values, as well as those who understand the unique opportunity we are all afforded by being part of a k-8 school. The administration and staff are working diligently to improve our communication with parents and the Wachusett community. This year, with support of parent volunteers, we have re-designed our website so that we streamlined communication, making information about the school more readily accessible. To address common parent concerns the staff and PTA together created a monthly Parent Series on topics of interest for our families.

## **BUILDING**

New faces are not the only change in our building. This last summer the Town of Princeton supported the tile floors being replaced in parts of our building. And what a facelift it gave us! The school district is continuing the tile replacement work this year and the school is looking great. We moved our extended day program into a home in room 112 so that the program would have a devoted space.

Through the amazing work of the STEAM council, and more specifically a small group of dedicated parent volunteers a Kindergarten through grade 5 science lab was created in room 100. Our students are so lucky to have this opportunity as science lab areas are not required for elementary grades, but the new Science Technology and Engineering frameworks do recommend them. This lab was carefully designed to align the needs of students, curriculum, and the STEAM philosophy. Through donations from parents, community members, the PTA, other schools and businesses, our lab has come alive! The Cringan-Baer STEAM lab now functions as our technology/ maker space. The amazing efforts of our PTA supported the procurement of a poster maker printer, poster maker computer, a 3-D printer and multiple Chrome Carts that are available for our students. The support of the PTA, the Princeton community, business partners, and parents have provided our students with additional STEAM opportunities that otherwise would not have been available. We have also created a mindfulness room, that we are still in the process of improving, it is here we will focus upon social emotional learning for our students. Up next, we will begin planning our Living Classroom that will be housed in the former garden.

## **LIBRARY**

Last school year a group of parent and community volunteers came together to organize and run our school library. Years ago, due to budget cuts, librarians were cut from the elementary schools. Currently our library is completely run and operated by parent and community volunteers! Their volunteer efforts have allowed all our grade levels to have scheduled weekly library times. Additionally, this group has raised funds to support new library materials.

## **THANK YOU**

The progress and success of TPS is visible each day in each one of our students. Several years ago the decision to make TPS a STEAM school began the promise of teaching our students in an aligned manner which met the demands of an ever-changing society. We have seen our population grow considerably as more parents choose to send their students to Thomas Prince School based upon what we offer academically and socially as a school.

At TPS we must constantly reflect and change to give our students every opportunity to be successful. The amazing support of the PTA, STEAM Council, SIAM Council, The Library Volunteers, parent volunteers, the Princeton Parks and Recreation department, the town of Princeton administration, and community volunteers exemplify how together we can all achieve more for our students! I thank you for all the support you give your children each day; each of us at TPS truly feel honored to work in such a fine community that is committed to moving forward and strives for excellence. Change is difficult and at times uncomfortable; the administration, faculty and staff are committed to confronting obstacles, providing support, and being receptive to feedback to assure that every TPS student can reach success.